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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 000369

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: PROTESTER POSSIBLY DEAD, KOZULIN CHARGED FOR  
HOOLIGANISM, AND BEATEN POLISH AMBASSADOR STILL IN HOSPITAL

REF: A. MINSK 331

[1](#)B. MINSK 223

[1](#)C. MINSK 358

Classified By: Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Independent news sources on March 30 circulated a story that Sergei Otroshchenko, allegedly a protester beaten by security forces on March 25 who subsequently went missing, died from his injuries in a Minsk hospital. The GOB denies the death and claims they have no information about a hospitalized protester named Otroshchenko. Journalists and human rights organizations cannot confirm the story, but a credible source told Poloff on March 31 the missing protester is actually alive and well and is not named Otroshchenko. The OSCE and political parties are asking people to report any information they have about Otroshchenko. Meanwhile, the General Prosecutor,s Office charged former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin with two counts of hooliganism and one count of organizing a mass demonstration, which could earn him up to six years in jail. Kozulin remains in the Zhodino detention center and is still suffering from severe back pain. Former Polish Ambassador to Belarus Mariusz Maszkiewicz, who was arrested on March 24 and sentenced to 15 days, remains in the hospital and 10 Coalition presidential candidate Aleksandr Milinkevich,s deputy manager Viktor Korniyenko was fined for possession of campaign materials. End Summary.

Protester Dead?

[1](#)2. (C) On March 30, 10 Coalition presidential candidate Aleksandr Milinkevich,s headquarters, independent news source Belapan, and various Russian media reported that Sergei Otroshchenko, allegedly the name of a protester severely beaten by security forces on March 25, died in Minsk,s ninth hospital on March 29. Otroshchenko, a Grodno-based United Civic Party activist, and 65-year-old Vladimir Shadinko, a protester who was shown on media coverage lying lifeless on the street on March 25, were severely beaten by riot police as they marched to the Okrestina detention center (ref A). Neither protester has reportedly been seen since March 25. Oleg Volchek, a campaign manager for former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin, told Poloff on March 28 that both of the seriously injured protesters were taken to Minsk Hospital 4 for treatment before the Ministry of the Interior moved them to undisclosed locations.

[1](#)3. (C) The human rights NGO Vyasna contacted doctors at Minsk,s ninth hospital, who claimed they could not list

patients who arrived or died on March 25 because the registration books from that weekend were locked up. (Note: Volchek on March 28 told Poloff that although over 20 protesters were treated at hospitals following the March 25 demonstration, no records exist of their injuries or treatment. According to Volchek, a security service officer accompanied each patient and either doctored the records or confiscated them.)

#### No Confirmation on Otroshchenko, But Shadinko Found

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14. (SBU) The rumors of Otroshchenko,s death caused journalists, political activists, and human rights organizations to comb their contacts to find any information about Otroshchenko,s whereabouts or alleged death. To date they have been unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the search revealed that the severely beaten Shadinko had been transferred to a Vitebsk hospital and was released.

15. (C) The authorities claimed they do not have records of a patient named Otroshchenko and called the rumors of a protester,s death a baseless lie. On March 31, spokesperson for Milinkevich Pavel Mazhienko told Poloff that a credible source claimed the beaten protester was in fact not named Sergei Otroshchenko and was alive and well. According to the source, the protester was not disclosing his true name and location since he was wanted by security services. Milinkevich,s headquarters and the OSCE are asking anyone with information about Otroshchenko to call their offices.

#### Other People Missing

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16. (C) Volchek, who is the leading independent investigator

MINSK 00000369 002 OF 002

of the 1999-2000 disappearances and presumed murders of political activists, told Poloff on March 31 that he too knew nothing about Otroshchenko,s alleged death. However, he concluded that if the GOB did not release information about Otroshchenko in the next few days, it could be concluded that the rumors of his death are true. Volchek added that three members of Kozulin,s party are also missing after being detained during demonstrations on March 19-25. (Note: The three activists could be among the dozens of people sentenced to 10-15 days in jail. The courts and prisons still have not released many names of those detained.)

#### Kozulin Officially Charged, Still In Pain

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17. (U) The General Prosecutor,s Office on March 30 formally charged Kozulin under the criminal codes with two counts of hooliganism in connection with the February 17 incident at the National Press Center and his March 2 beating (Ref B) and one count of organizing and participating in a group action that disturbed the public peace on March 25. Each hooliganism charge carries a prison sentence of up to six years and the latter charge carries a prison sentence of up to two years. Kozulin filed a complaint with the Prosecutor,s Office calling the charges politically motivated and issued a petition demanding the Supreme Court invalidate the official presidential election results.

18. (C) Volchek said the lead investigator in Kozulin,s case agreed to find the ALMAZ officers who beat Kozulin, but Volchek doubts they will be brought to justice. Kozulin is able to walk, but is reportedly still suffering from severe back pain (ref C) and is not getting proper medical treatment. He refuses pain-relieving shots from the prison medics, fearing he could be poisoned, but takes tablets given to him by his wife.

19. (C) Volchek and the rest of Kozulin,s campaign team is distributing a petition asking for Kozulin,s release with

the promise that he will not leave Belarus to 100 of Belarus, most famous and influential people. Volchek believes the chances for Kozulin,s release depends solely on President Lukashenko and the amount of international pressure he faces.

#### Beaten Polish Ambassador Still in Hospital

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¶10. (U) The Polish Embassy,s consular office reported on March 30 that former Polish Ambassador to Belarus Mariusz Maszkiewicz would remain in Minsk,s First Clinical Hospital for several more days. Maszkiewicz was arrested on March 24 on October Square when security forces razed the tent city and was sentenced to 15 days in jail (Ref C). On March 29, Maszkiewicz was transferred from the Okryestina detention center to a hospital after complaining of pain in his left side. According to the Polish Embassy, doctors did not approve of the electrocardiogram results and suggested a full medical examination.

#### Milinkevich Deputy Fined

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¶11. (U) A Zhlobin district judge in the Gomel region on March 31 fined Milinkevich,s deputy campaign manager Viktor Korniyenko USD 70 dollars for violating electoral laws and ordered 28,000 campaign booklets police seized from the activist to be destroyed. According to the judge, the slogans &Milinkevich Is The Next President8 violated the electoral code, as Milinkevich is not the next president. Korniyenko, who was severely beaten by &unknown8 men outside his house on March 23, was not invited to the hearing. He plans to appeal.

#### 60 People Released From Jail

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¶12. (U) At midnight on March 31, prison officials at Staroborovski Trakt and Okryestina detention centers released 60 detainees who were arrested during demonstrations on March 19-25. According to an activist of the private entrepreneurs, movement Aleksandr Makayev, he and fellow activists met the prisoners upon their release and helped many get home.  
Krol